

The
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Submitting Material for Publication

We encourage our readers to consider submitting material on early North American numismatics to CNL for publication. In general, this includes coins, tokens, paper money, and medals that were current before the U.S. Federal Mint began operations in 1793. However, there are certain pieces produced after the 1793 date that have traditionally been considered part of pre-Federal numismatics and should be included. We cover all aspects of study regarding the manufacture and use of these items. Our very knowledgeable and friendly staff will assist potential authors to finalize submissions by providing advice concerning the text and help with illustrations. Submissions in either electronic or hard copy format, should be sent to the editor via the e-mail address given above or through the ANS at their postal address. Electronic text submissions should be formatted in Word with separate grayscale images.



Editorial

It has been a real privilege and honor to be the custodian editor for the *Colonial Newsletter* during these last five years. Not only have I had the great pleasure of sounding things off of people like John Kleeberg and especially the indomitable Phil Mossman over the years, but of serving a readership that includes many old and new friends. Nevertheless, the time has now come for me to move on to new projects and to pass *CNL* on to other hands.

I will be staying on as Editor through the end of volume 56 (2016), during which time I will be showing the ropes to Christopher McDowell, who will then take over for volume 57 (2017). I could not have been more pleased when I was informed that Chris would be replacing me. At the time I had just started reading his 2015 book on *Abel Buell and the History of the Connecticut and Fugio Coinages* for a forthcoming review in the *ANS Magazine*. The meticulous discussion, combined with a highly readable style, makes the book a real must for anyone interested in the history of Connecticut and Fugio coppers. It also shows that Chris is the right man to serve as the new Editor of the *Colonial Newsletter*. Indeed, he has many interesting ideas on where to take *CNL* from here and I understand he has

already begun to lean on friends and colleagues in the Colonial numismatic community to help bring them about.

In addition to his book, Chris also brings some high qualifications to the position of *CNL* Editor. Like many readers, he has been a coin collector since his youth—beginning with Lincoln cents, but then discovering his first Colonial coin in the form of a 1785 Miller 4.1-F.4 Connecticut copper. Chris now has close to 300 different Connecticut varieties and has written numerous articles on various aspects of numismatics. In 2009, he received the Gloria Peters Literary Award from Women in Numismatics for some of his work. Along with his collecting and writing activities, Chris can boast an editorial background as well, having served as senior editor of the National Coal Issue, *West Virginia Law Review*.

I, for one, look forward to seeing what Chris has in mind for the future of the *Colonial Newsletter*. I hope that readers will join me in welcoming Chris aboard and help him out when he comes knocking on the door in search of writers and good content.

Now that we have this bit of important housekeeping out of the way, I invite you

to sit back and enjoy the contents of the first issue of *CNL* for 2016.

We begin with two important responses to articles that have previously appeared in our pages. The first is a letter from William Nyberg that attempts to correct the controversial article on proposed hidden engravers' signatures on Washington Indian Peace Medals that took up the bulk of *CNL*-159 (sequential pages 4326–4362). His skepticism mirrors views made in private by other readers in private and online. The second takes the form of a brief article by Dennis Wierzba responding to Thomas Kays' downdating of the Castine Hoard to 1779 (*CNL*-128, pp. 2837–2868). His presentation of critical provenance evidence shows that Noe rightly excluded the two coins that would have pushed the date of the hoard into the late 1770s and therefore Kay's proposal must be abandoned.

The main feature for this issue is Roger Siboni's critical study of the life and tokens of John Ricketts, the celebrated founder of the first circus in the United States. A slightly different version of this article previously appeared in the March-April 2015 issue of the *MCA Advisory*.

We conclude *CNL*-160 with the return of the plate series documenting the Colonial coin holdings of the American Numismatic Society. Coverage of the extensive Connecticut and New Jersey copper collections continues, as does that of the Massachusetts silver. The fourth set of plates covers copper patterns and proposals for New York.

Oliver D. Hoover
CNL@numismatics.org

Letter to the Editor

I had read with much interest the article by Gary Gianotti and Ron Miller after it was published in the *Colonial Newsletter*. I greatly appreciate the references to my 2015 biography, *Robert Scot: Engraving Liberty*. There was good information in the article about Joseph Wright's early training and work as an artist.

The identification of possible hidden initials can be very speculative and difficult to prove. With the magnification from enlarged digital images, what a person observes and interprets can be distorted. There can be shadows, circulation marks, stray die lines, cross hatching, and other anomalies that may or may not have been intentionally engraved, and could take the form of any letter in the alphabet. I do not believe that any of the purported initials in the article represent intentionally engraved initials; rather they are part of the design that may have the rough shape of a letter. I also do not believe Robert Scot engraved any of the oval George Washington Indian Peace Medals, as they have no technical or stylistic attributes of Scot's work. In my book, more than 800 engravings listed in the Appendix have archival documentation in all but a few cases, as I did not want to include engravings of speculative attribution.

A reference was made in the article of the hidden initials by Scot's apprentices that were described and imaged in my book. These "hidden" initials are actually quite clear and well formed, and can be found with the naked eye, as opposed to the supposed initials presented in the article. They were described by Judy L. Larson in 1987, and also by Robert D. Arner in 1991 (both referenced in my book). I have included two images from my collection of Samuel Allardice initials, one hidden under a wolf's tail (CXIX) and one not so hidden (CXV). It should also be noted that Scot's apprentices usually put their initials directly under Scot's signature, in plain view.

The article states that Robert Scot may have traveled to Great Britain in 1791. The year 1791 was very busy for Scot, with 60 documented engravings completed for Thomas Dobson's *Encyclopædia*, and other work. Scot would not have had time for the 3-4 month round trip voyage to Great Britain. There were dozens of people with the name Robert Scot[t] in Great Britain at that time. As reported in Philadelphia newspapers, Scot's engravings were published in these intervals through 1791: Volume II, Part 2, February, 1791 (26 engravings). Volume III, May, 1791 (16 engravings). Volume IV, September, 1791 (19 engravings). In late 1791, Scot was working on Volume V, with 17 engravings published on March 10, 1792.

As clarification, the last two of the five documented apprentices of Robert Scot were John Draper and Benjamin Jones, working for the partnership of Scot & Allardice starting in 1794 (*Robert Scot*, pp. 86-87, 103). I did not describe Joseph Wright or John Vallance as apprentices of Scot, or as having received direction from Scot. I did include Wright as the "initial engraver of the original [master] die" of the Liberty Cap Cent type in the Appendix, as Robert Scot later did a slight modification to this design.

Although I did not agree with the entire article, I did enjoy it, especially the recognition given to Robert Scot for his important contributions and leadership as one of the great early American engravers, and for this I thank Gary Gianotti and Ron Miller.

William F. Nyberg

Letter to the Editor and ANS Director of Publications

Dear Mr. Hoover and Mr. Reinhard,

Thank you for the opportunity to publish our article on silver oval George Washington Indian peace medals in *CNL*-159. It has come to our attention that our research article has garnered some disagreement among collectors. Not only did we expect this, we welcome this.

As you and your readers know, *The Colonial Newsletter* is an esteemed “research journal in early American numismatics” in which readers are encouraged to submit their research. The honest impetus for this massive research project stemmed from a dearth of new information on this challenging series. Our research backgrounds and burning desire to share what we learned also provided fuel. As we clearly state at the beginning and end of our article, the objective was “to shed some light on a plausible method of authentication” and hopefully provide a “starting point for similar investigations and future debate.” It certainly appears we were successful with at least the latter! We hoped our research could supplement the only extensive research contribution ever published on the series. Written by the late, great George J. Fuld in the March 1996 issue of *The Numismatist*, he artfully provided very useful information on the number and likely composition and assembly of silver oval GW medals. Most notably Mr. Fuld was not rigid or absolute with his astute opinions on a variety of characteristics of these medals. We encourage your interested readers to give this article a detailed read.

Below we would like to provide some background about ourselves and how we became involved in this project. Admittedly, in hindsight we should have provided this information as a prelude to our *CNL*-159 article. However, neither of us felt this fit with the *CNL* content style we have seen in the past. We offer our sincere apologies for this misstep. Further, we never meant to mislead your readership or adulterate the field of numismatics in any fashion. Numismatics and American history are passions at our core, and this deceit would have been counter to our values.

In 2014, Dr. Miller acquired a silver oval GW medal dated 1792 and hallmarked ‘JW’ from a scrupulous octogenarian gentleman from New York. After some exciting preliminary research by Dr. Miller and informal consultations with silver oval GW medal experts, this medal was subsequently sold to the current owner. The current owner, a lovely older gentleman from New England, asked Dr. Miller to more formally consult additional experts on his behalf. Upon completion of this process and after returning the medal regretfully to the current owner (NOTE: Neither Dr. Miller nor Mr. Gianotti have any knowledge whatsoever of what plans the current owner has for the medal), Dr. Miller grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of open-mindedness by some experts. He found it troubling that the authenticity of silver oval GW medals relied exclusively on unequivocal pedigrees and/or the opinion of a handful of expert collectors some of whom (not all) may be overly and unfairly cautious with their determinations, presumably for professional reasons. Bear in mind, these medals were hand-engraved by Philadelphia artisans with no extant Mint records describing who, when, or how they were manufactured. Thus, there are no standard criteria of authentication, but instead collectors have relied on personal opinions and potential biases of a select few. Again, the current status of the aforementioned medal is unknown to your authors. Without a doubt there are a lot of counterfeits to account for, but we believe without any doubt that our detailed investigation proves both the Woolaroc Museum- and New York-Joseph Wright (JW) silver oval GW medals and the other medals in our article share identical hidden marks and engraving styles and are all truly authentic.

We hope that after putting countless hours of research and a couple thousand dollars into

rights to use images of the medals and artwork provided in our contribution, that you and your readership will accept our findings as a good faith effort to advance our hobby forward and ultimately begin an open-minded conversation.

Sincerely yours,

Ron A. Miller PhD & Gary Gianotti

The Castine Hoard Revisited: Dating of the Hoard

by

Dennis P. Wierzba; York Harbor, ME

Thomas A. Kays published a well-researched, but controversial article in the August 2005 *CNL*, "Second Thoughts on a First Rate Coin Hoard: Castine Revisited" (pp. 2837–2868). The article gives the history of the hoard along with details on the Penobscot expedition. He noticed that in a photo entitled "Old Coins found at Castine, Maine," taken 1883 or earlier, a 1769 two-bit cob of Bolivia among the 18 coins shown. He suggested that the hoard may not date from the time of Baron Jean St. Castin (circa 1704), but later—about the time of the Penobscot expedition (1779) based on the 1769 date of the coin.

One primary source for the hoard is an 1859 article by Joseph Williamson, "Castine: and the Old Coins Found There." The Wilson Museum has reprinted the article online in two parts along with the 18-coin photo.¹ In this article, the Dr. Stevens collection of coins taken from the Castine hoard was described as follows "... (Stevens) to select the most perfect specimens of each variety that could be found. These seventeen in number, he paid for at the rate of old silver."²

In 1942, Sydney Noe published "The Castine Deposit: an American Hoard" with plates.³ He received 26 coins—19 coins in a custom display (Stevens' collection) and 7 others from the Maine Historical Society (MHS) thought to be from the Castine hoard (donated by Williamson). Of the 19 coins in the custom display, Noe rejected two coins as inconsistent with Stevens' selection criteria—reducing the hoard number to the expected 17. These two were eliminated because of date (later than 1700) and wear: no. 24 (well-worn 1769 Potosí [coin in photo], but inferior to the same type, no. 16) and no. 26 (imitation of a 2-*reales* dated 182, i.e., 1800s and inferior to the same type, no. 16).

About two years ago, I had the privilege to meet with John Mayer, Museum Curator of the Maine Historical Society and viewed both the Castine⁴ and Richmond Island⁵ hoard coins. He also shared with me the collection notes file. The following is a relevant note (September 1880) about the Stevens donation: "This collection is believed to contain a carefully selected specimen of every variety discovered. For many years it numbered seventeen. Two appear, by a memorandum, to have been added in 1865 and 1866. No other collection so complete was made."

This previously unknown piece of correspondence validates Noe's decision to reject coin nos. 24 and no. 26 as additions ("interpolations") to the hoard. Likewise, the Kays theory that the hoard is dated to 1779 based on the inclusion of a worn 1769 coin (no. 24) that Noe removed must also be rejected.

1 Part 1: wilsonmuseum.org/bulletins/spring2003.html; Part 2: wilsonmuseum.org/bulletins/summer2003.html.

2 See also Kays 2005: 2839.

3 Numismatic Notes and Monographs 100.

4 The 19 Stevens coins can be viewed at mainehistory.pastperfect-online.com/32314cgi/mweb.exe?rec by entering a00 52 (the catalog number for the Stevens donation) in the search box.

5 The 29 Richmond Island Treasure coins can be viewed at mainehistory.pastperfect-online.com/32314cgi/mweb.exe?rec by entering "Richmond island treasure coin" in the search box.

The Ricketts's Circus Tokens
by
Roger S. Siboni; Mantoloking, NJ¹

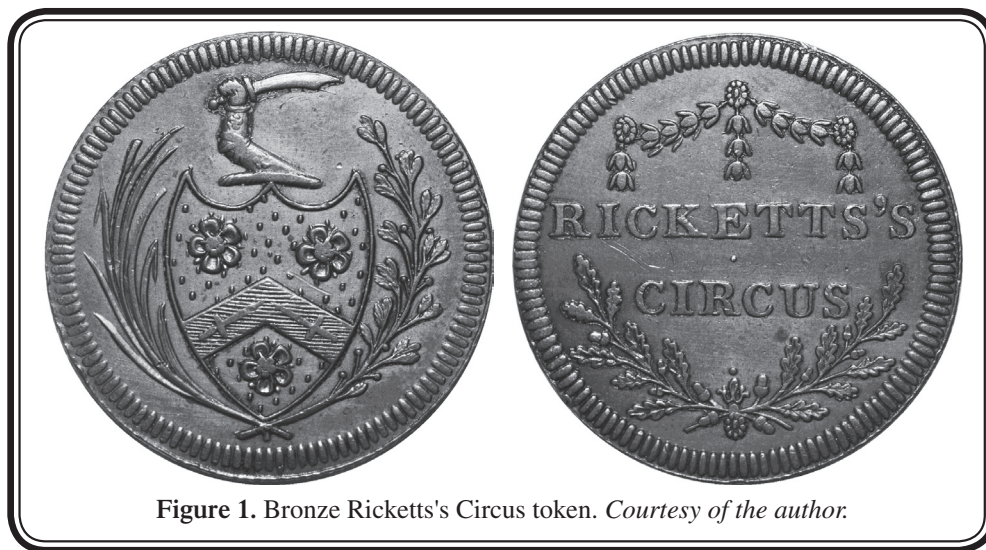


Figure 1. Bronze Ricketts's Circus token. *Courtesy of the author.*

About once a year, a friend or numismatic colleague will pose the question: “What is your favorite coin, medal, or token?” We have all been asked that question or at least pondered it during our quieter moments. People often say it is like being asked which is your favorite child. It almost seems impossible to choose just one, but, in the case of Colonial numismatics, if one looks beyond the plain metallic object and considers all the circumstances of its existence, the question becomes a little bit easier to answer. Why was a particular coin, medal, or token made? Is it rare? Does it come in varieties? Who struck it? Where was it struck? Who used it and how? When the author takes all these questions into account, it is hard not to look very closely at the Ricketts's Circus token—possibly the first token ever struck by the newly established United States Mint for admission to the first circus (or multi-entertainment venue) ever produced in our new country.

Ricketts's Circus entertained many of the historic luminaries of the day from George Washington to Citizen Genet as they each shaped our new country.²

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge and thank Jack Howes, Ray Williams, Gary Groll, Robert Julian, David Fanning, Matthew Wittmann, Michael Hodder, Joseph Levine, John Kraljevich, and David Bowers for their advice, suggestions, and other contributions to this article. An earlier version of this article appeared in the *MCA Advisory* (April–May 2015).

² George Washington's Household Accounts, maintained from 1793 to 1797, indicate the purchase of box seats and having attended Ricketts's Circus twice during his first term in office shortly after the Circus commenced. Once on April 24, 1793, without Martha, and once again on July 13, 1793, with Martha. Ricketts' own advertisement in the April 24, 1793, edition of *Dunlap's Daily Advertiser* noted that the President would be attending the evening show.

In Washington's second term, Ricketts honored him for his sixty-fourth birthday on February 22, 1796, when the Circus returned to Philadelphia (with attendant advertising). The President described the performance as “an elegant entertainment, given on my birth night.” Finally, on March 4, 1797, the Merchants of Philadelphia once again honored Washington at the Circus with a special performance. The President's attendance at both of these later performances was reported in *Claypoole's Daily Advertiser* of Philadelphia of February 23, 1796, and March 6, 1797. See *Founder's Online* through NHPRC in

Ricketts's Circus

John Bill Ricketts came to the United States shortly after its formation in October of 1792. George Washington was near completion of his third year in his first term as President. The first cornerstone had just been laid in the White House in the new District of Columbia and the Mint of the United States had just opened its doors for business.

Ricketts chose Philadelphia as the place to bring his experiment in entertainment to North America. At that time, Philadelphia was not only the capital, but also the most populous city in the United States. In addition, it was arguably the most cultured American city of the time. He chose a venue for his new endeavor at 12th and Market Street, which in today's terms would have been about seven blocks from Independence Hall and the hustle and bustle of our nation's affairs. Portending Ricketts' future flair for the dramatic, the October 12, 1792 *Federal Gazette and Daily Advertiser* announced his arrival with the following introduction:

Mr. Ricketts, lately from London respectfully acquaints the public, that he has erected at considerable expense a circus situated at the corner of Market and Twelfth (*sic*) streets where he proposes to instructing Ladies and Gentlemen, in the elegant accomplishment of riding.

—The Circus will be open on Thursday Next, the 25th October 1792.

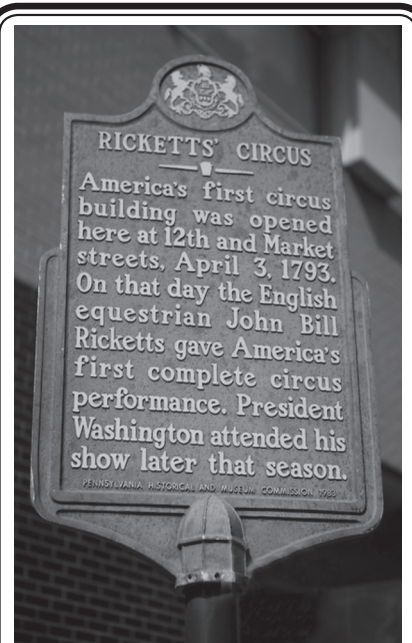


Figure 2. Philadelphia historical marker for Ricketts's Circus.

partnership with the University of Virginia Press. See also "Washington and America's First Circus 1793" (<https://intriguinghistory.wordpress.com/2014/06/07/ricketts-circus-george-washington-and-americas-first-circus-1793/>).

Washington's close proximity to the Circus in Philadelphia and other relationships that will be discussed below suggest that he probably attended more frequently than the four recorded times. According to *A Recent History of the American Circus*, President Adams is also recorded in attendance at Ricketts's Circus on October 21, 1797, in New York City but this may be erroneous reporting (see James S. Moy, *John B. Ricketts's Circus 1793–1800*, PhD. diss. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1977): 1.

Citizen Genet was the popular name for Edmond-Charles Genêt, the French Ambassador to the United States during the French Revolution. His work for the Girondist faction of the Revolution in 1793–1794 threatened American neutrality and resulted in the so-called "Citizen Genet Affair," in which Washington demanded that France recall the ambassador. Genêt was duly recalled by the Jacobins, who had taken control of the Revolution from the Girondists and intended to execute him, but Washington granted the ambassador asylum in the United States.

In the October 1912 edition of the *Numismatist*, a communication between Mr. Blanchard of Ricketts's Circus and the Editor of *Claypoole's Daily Advertiser* was reported in which Citizen Genet assured Blanchard that he would attend the Circus's performance of a "natural science" event. This event involved placing a dog, a cat, and a squirrel in a basket dropped earth by parachute from a hot air balloon over a mile above the ground. As we read in the paper of June 5 and 7, 1793, the experiment was a complete success as the animals were "brought back alive, with great triumph to the circus, surrounded by vast crowds of admiring spectators."

It has always been assumed that Ricketts was of Scottish descent and part of the distinguished family of Sir Cornwallis Ricketts (1803–1885), whose coat of arms is roughly portrayed on the obverse of the Ricketts's Circus token (see discussion below).³ Prior to coming to America, Ricketts is believed to have performed in Edinburgh with the Circus Royal.⁴ It is also believed that he studied under the famous English equestrian and circus manager, Charles Hughes, in London.⁵ In the eighteenth century, the circus was very different than it is today. The best circuses in Europe provided a range of entertainment, generally including pantomime, opera, singing, dancing, and instrumental music, along with rope-dancing, balancing acts, clowning, acrobatics, and equestrian performances. Moreover, circuses more focused on equestrian aspects, like those of Charles Hughes or Phillip Astley,⁶ taught horsemanship by day and gave performances at night. The astute Ricketts not only used his years working with various English circuses to perfect his craft, but also discerned which types of performances drew the largest crowds and from which classes of people. His acumen as a circus manager as well as his equestrian expertise drove his ultimate success in America.

At the outset, Ricketts's Circus was largely focused on instruction and it appears that from the very beginning he was a success. In the November 10, 1792, *General Advertiser* of Philadelphia the following column appeared:

Amongst the variety of amusements inviting the fashionable class of Citizens to every quarter of Philadelphia Mr. Ricketts (*sic*) Circus, near the Center Square, bids fair to come in for a considerable portion of the public favor. Already we find it resorted to by many numbers of ladies and gentleman every morning who are desirous to perfect themselves in the elegant accomplishment of horsemanship. —We have not [discovered whether] Mr. Ricketts intends favoring the city with any public Exhibitions this season. He is at present employed in the business of instruction. Perhaps we expect to see him make a public exhibition early in the Spring.


3 Dominique Jando, "The First Circus In America," http://www.circopedia.org/John_Bill_Ricketts; Moy 1977: 1; *American Journal of Numismatics* (June 1868): 238. However, Matthew Wittmann cites a discovery by Australian circus scholar, Mark St. Leon, that suggests a John Bill Ricketts was christened in the town of Bilston in Staffordshire on October 28, 1769. This date roughly corresponds to what we believe Ricketts' age was when he came to America. There were no parental names listed, implying to St. Leon and Wittmann that Ricketts was illegitimate. They go on to suggest that Ricketts just attached himself to the lineage of Sir Cornwallis Ricketts family for the associated prestige. See <http://www.matthewwittmann.com/john-bill-ricketts-one-mystery-unraveled/>.

4 As late as March 8, 1792, the *Caledonian Mercury* of Edinburgh reported Ricketts performing equestrian feats "highly worthy the notice of the public at large."

5 S. L. Kotar and J. E. Gessler, *The Rise of the American Circus, 1716–1899* (Jefferson, NC, 2011). See also Jando (http://www.circopedia.org/John_Bill_Ricketts).

6 Phillip Astley ran one of England's most successful circuses. He had several store cards and/or admission tokens produced for his circus. See M. Denton and T. Prattent, *The Virtuoso's companion and coin collectors guide* (London, 1797): pl. 51; J. Conder, *An arrangement of provincial coins, tokens, and medalets, issued in Great Britain, Ireland, and the Colonies, within the last twenty years* (Ipswich, 1798): 92, 182; C. Pye, *A correct and complete representation of all of the Provincial copper coins...which were circulated as such between the years 1787 and 1801* (London, 1801), pl. 39, 3; T. Sharp, *A catalogue of provincial copper coins, tokens, tickets, and medalets, issued in Great Britain, Ireland, and the colonies, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries* (London, 1834): 66, 79; R. Samuel, "Provincial Copper Coins and Tokens," *The Bazaar, Exchange and Mart and Journal of the Household* (1880–1889): 164; J. Atkins, *Tradesmen's Tokens of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1892): 100, 257; and R. Dalton and M. J. Hamer, *The Provincial Token-Coinage of the 18th-Century* (Bristol, 1910–1918): Middlesex 362. Charles Hughes also used store cards and/or admission tokens, but to a lesser extent. See Hughes's Mammoth Equestrian Establishment in W. J. Davis and A. W. Waters, *Tickets and passes of Great Britain and Ireland struck or engraved on metal, ivory, etc., for use at theatres, public gardens, shows, exhibitions, clubs, societies, schools and colleges* (Leamington Spa, 1922): 6, 51. Many more tokens are listed for the Royal Circus (on Blackfriars Road, Surrey) in Davis and Waters 1922: 36, 381–391.

Ricketts's Circus.
LOWER END OF GREENE-STREET.



On Friday, August the 4th, 1797,
A GREAT VARIETY OF
EQUESTRIAN EXERCISES,
By Mr. RICKETTS and his COMPANY.
Mr. RICKETTS will exhibit a GRAND PERFORMANCE with the

Broad Sword,
Going through the Guards of different Nations, Offensive and Defensive, as in real action, upon the
Celebrated Horse, Cornplanter,
Who is thoroughly trained for the purpose. The sagacity of this Horse is truly wonderful.
CLOWN to the HORSEMANSHIP---By Mr. DURANG.
Still Vaulting, or a Trial of Skill, over a single Horse---By Mr. Ricketts and Mr. Durang.
Mr. Ricketts will ride with Master Hutchins on his shoulders, in the attitude of
A FLYING MERCURY.
A variety of other exercises, both Novel and Pleasing.

THE WHOLE TO CONCLUDE WITH
The Taylor's Disaster ;
Or, Johnny Gilpin's Journey to Brentford---By Mr. Durang.
Doors to be opened in future at five o'clock, and the Performance to begin precisely at six.
Days of Performance---Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays.
Tickets may be had at the City-Tavern, at the Circus, and at Barber & Southwick's Book-store.
BOX 8s---PITT 4s.

Figure 3. Advertisement for Ricketts's Circus.

Taking a page from Hughes and Astley's book, Ricketts preceded the introduction of his circus entertainment by developing an equestrian following among the upper class of Philadelphia and building anticipation for what was to become the first American circus.

On April 3, 1793, Ricketts's long-awaited circus was finally ready to open for performances. It was truly a great success. *Dunlap's Daily Advertiser* reported the following day that there were nearly seven hundred spectators and had there been more room, hundreds more would have attended. It went on to report that Mr. Ricketts's "performance was beyond expectation, beautiful, graceful and superb, in the highest extreme...and the pleasure with which they were received [was] perfectly delightful."

In the beginning, Ricketts performed alone with one exception. He concluded each performance with a young boy standing upon his shoulders with one foot raised behind him in the "attitude of Mercury" while Ricketts himself stood upon two horses at full gallop (illustrated in the second vignette in Fig. 3).



Figure 4. Etching of Ricketts trick-riding in the "attitude of Mercury."

Not only did Ricketts teach by day and conduct evening performances at least two nights a week, in order to bring back audiences for repeat viewings, he would constantly adjust his performances and increase their difficulty. Ricketts was a magician on horseback (Fig. 4). He could hang from a stirrup; vault from side to side over the saddle of a horse at full gallop. He could ride two horses simultaneously—standing up— ..., and juggl[e] oranges astride his mounts while circling the ring backwards.⁷

All of his planning, hard work, and extraordinary natural abilities paid off and in little over a month, he began hiring additional performers, including clowns, rope dancers, and pantomimists.

⁷ Moy 1977: 30.

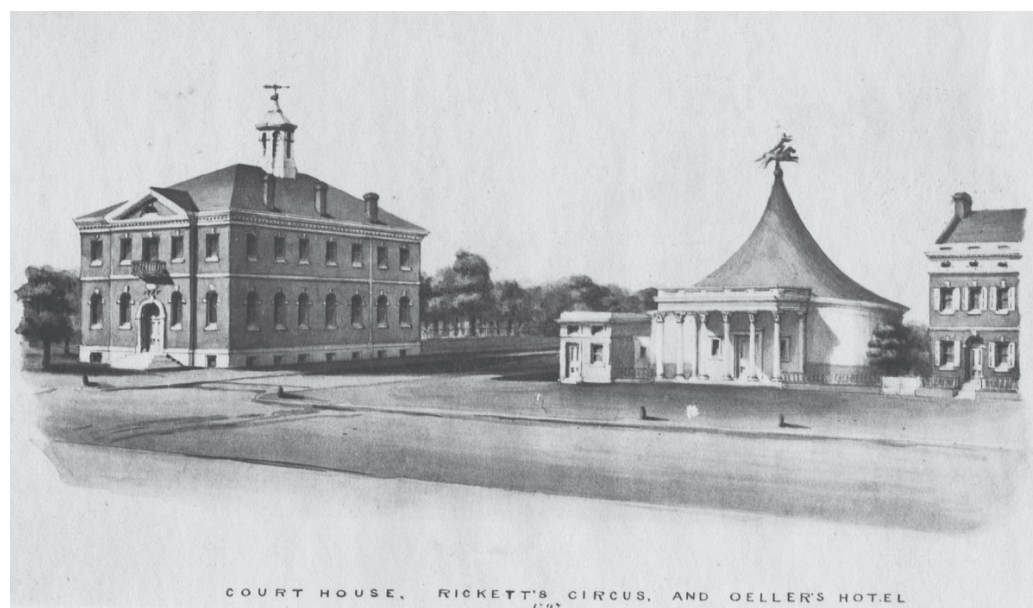


Figure 5. Print depicting Ricketts's Pantheon amphitheater (center).

Ricketts charged one dollar for box seats and half a dollar for the pit with performances beginning between 4 o'clock and 6:30 pm.⁸

Over the next seven years, Ricketts built, opened, and closed amphitheatres in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Boston, Norfolk, Richmond, Charleston, and several other cities, including venues used for a two-year tour through the cities of eastern Canada.⁹ He invested heavily in his venues and the costumes for his performers. His performances were constantly in flux ranging from increasingly difficult equestrian feats, to horse races, to tightrope walking, to singing and dancing, and even performances featuring events of the day like "The Whiskey Rebellion" or famous plays of the past like *Don Juan*.¹⁰ At its high point, his troupe included over 20 performers.¹¹ This was easily the largest aggregation of performance talent anywhere in the United States at that time.

On October 19, 1795, Ricketts presented the crown jewel of his circus to the public: the Pantheon amphitheater at Sixth and Chestnut Street, not far from his original first riding school (Fig. 5). The building was easily his largest single investment in his circus. It was of circular form, 97 feet in diameter, and had a conical roof that rose from 18-foot-high outer walls, reaching 50 feet from

⁸ Ricketts retained two-tiered box and pit pricing throughout the many years and venues of his performances, although the prices varied over time. This two-tiered pricing suggests the need for different seat admission tokens in silver and bronze, as discussed further below.

⁹ While his Philadelphia Pantheon amphitheater was both an architectural and performance wonder, the theaters he would set up in his various tour stops were usually put together quickly. They were erected with wood and sometimes stone, used for the short duration of the stop, and then normally torn down again with every bit of excess material sold for scrap. In effect, these short-duration amphitheatres were simply part of the cost of the production. See Kotar and Gessler 2011: 61.

¹⁰ The types of entertainment are described by Moy (1977: 11) and in various contemporary newspapers in the author's possession. See also William Gold, "Ricketts Circus—Promoting Acceptance of the Circus Community" at <http://www.philaplace.org/story/1172/>.

¹¹ Moy 1977: 62.

the ground. On the top was a figure of Mercury flying, harkening back to his first performances. The theater, which could seat an audience of up to 1,400 people, was equipped for elaborate equestrian performances as well as for all forms of theatrical presentations.

At about the same time, and no doubt at the height of his notoriety, Ricketts was the subject of a Gilbert Stuart portrait that rests in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. (Fig. 6). The portrait ultimately remained unfinished. Stuart noted that he could never get Ricketts to stay still long enough to paint the portrait, but the artist also had a reputation for not being able to ever complete a portrait himself.¹²

Ricketts' association with George Washington has also been talked about over the years in conjunction with the circus. One commentator even speculated that the two men were related, but this is not so.¹³ Nevertheless, it is true that Washington, also considered one of the finest horsemen in America, did attend Ricketts's Circus on multiple occasions. The two periodically rode together and no doubt formed some kind of friendship. Washington sold Ricketts his 28-year-old horse "Jack," which he last rode in the American Revolution. Ricketts treasured the horse and it was regularly put on "special" display during his various performances, constituting the first American side show.

In an age before electricity, the only way to illuminate an indoor theater was to strategically position lit candles throughout the theater. One can easily imagine the combustible combination of candles with the wood and canvas of the theater building. On December 17, 1799, Ricketts's long-trusted carpenter accidentally left a candle burning in the Philadelphia Pantheon. This led to a fire that not only destroyed Ricketts's main circus venue, but also badly damaged several adjacent buildings. This proved to be a virtually unrecoverable financial and psychological loss

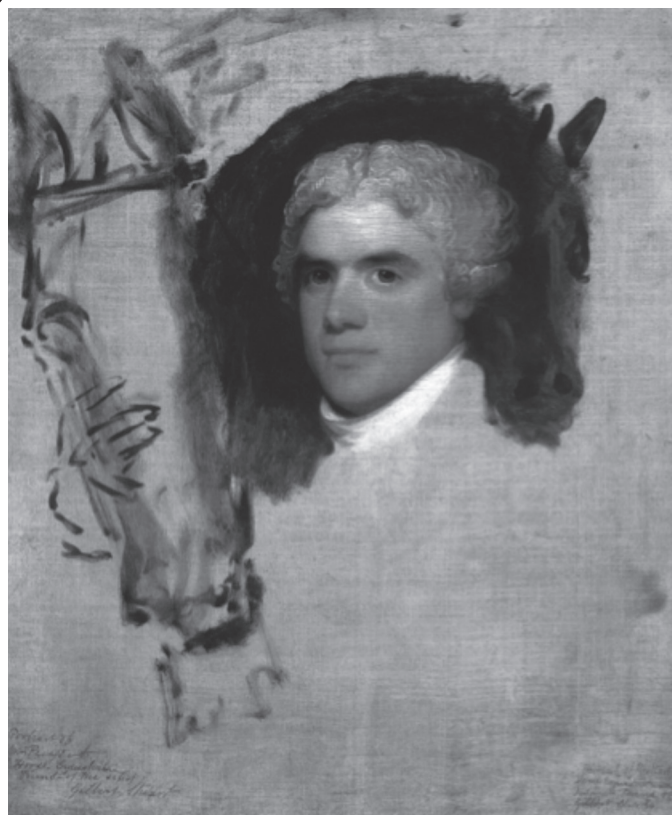


Figure 6. Unfinished portrait of John Bill Ricketts by Gilbert Stuart.

¹² There is some debate as to whether the portrait in the National Gallery is actually of John Bill Ricketts. Some commentators have suggested that it is a portrait of Jean Breschard, another famous circus equestrian rider (see <http://gilbertstuart.blogspot.ca/2010/01/john-bill-ricketts-or-jean-breschard.html>). However, the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. leaves little doubt as to whom they believe the portrait to represent. Further, this image bears a striking likeness to a contemporary etching of Ricketts illustrated in Figure 4.

¹³ See, for example, <http://www.wotfa.org/tuneOfTheMonth/pages/062013RickettsHornpipe.html>.

to Ricketts.¹⁴ He tried to salvage what he could and took his circus to New York City, but several unsuccessful attempts to revive the Circus, his ill humor and that of his remaining troupe over the losses proved insurmountable. As Dominique Jando writes in "The First Circus in America":

Disheartened, Ricketts resolved to leave the country. He charted a small ship and, with some horses, his brother, a stable boy, a pupil, and Mr. Miller—his faithful, if calamitous carpenter—he sailed to the West Indies. Once there, a series of uncanny circumstances followed involving French Pirates, the shrewdness of Ricketts's groom, and the generosity of a Guadalupe merchant. By year's end, Ricketts managed to recoup his losses. He sold his horses to great advantage and set sail for England.¹⁵

Unfortunately, as the contemporary actor, John Durang, records in his memoirs, "the vessel floundered and he [Ricketts] was lost with all his money at sea."¹⁶

The Ricketts's Circus Token

The Ricketts's Circus token is certainly among the most famous, earliest, rarest, and enigmatic of all American tokens. It has been researched and commented on by many numismatic luminaries including J. T. Levick, John F. McCoy, Charles Ira Bushnell, Benjamin Betts, Russell Rulau, Robert Julian, John J. Ford, Michael Hodder, and John Kraljevich. Articles or discussions of the token have graced the pages of the *American Journal of Numismatics*, *The Numismatist*, and several notable auction catalogues. Yet the details of manufacture, mintage, the question of originals and restrikes, and number extant examples remain unclear.

The status of the token as one of my favorite "numismatic children" prompted me to assemble the following composite of the published research along with a few personal observations and speculations.

U.S. Mint Product

Given how early in time Ricketts began his circus, the relatively refined execution of the token, and the abundance of English theater tokens made around the same time,¹⁷ one has to ask if the Ricketts's Circus token is truly an early U.S. Mint product? After hours of consideration and examination, my initial instinct was to conclude this was not an early U.S. Mint token, but a multitude of compelling facts have caused me to at least reconsider what my eyes seem to tell me.

During the period 1841–1854, Franklin Peale prepared and maintained an inventory of dies on hand at the U.S. Mint. Prominent among them were dies for the Ricketts's Circus token. One might argue that Ricketts commissioned the dies and tokens in England and brought them here. Alternatively, he might have had the dies made in England, but only struck tokens after he had brought them to America. Both these possible scenarios are problematic. Considering

¹⁴ It has been speculated that Ricketts lost over \$20,000 in the fire (Kotar and Gessler 2011: 62). This would be roughly equivalent to \$385,200 in 2014 dollars based on the Composite Commodity Price Index for 2014 and John J. McKusker, *How Much is that in Real Money?* 2nd ed. (San Antonio, 2001).

¹⁵ http://www.circopedia.org/John_Bill_Ricketts. Wittmann (<http://www.matthewwittmann.com/john-bill-ricketts-one-mystery-unraveled/>) also uncovered documents in the *Congressional Record* suggesting that Ricketts' financial recovery may have been aided by an insurance policy he had taken out in Philadelphia prior to his departure to the West Indies which paid him \$3,920 (or roughly \$75,499.20 in 2014 dollars calculated as in note 14, above).

¹⁶ John Durang, *The Memoir of John Durang American Actor 1785-1816*, ed. Alan S. Downer (Pittsburg, 1966). See also Wittmann (<http://www.matthewwittmann.com/john-bill-ricketts-one-mystery-unraveled/>).

¹⁷ See note 6, above.



Figure 7. Ricketts's Circus token (center) compared to the Major Henry Lee token (above) and 1793 U.S. large cent (below). *Courtesy of the author.*

how speculative and costly the new circus venture was likely to be, it is hard to imagine that Ricketts would have ordered dies for admission tokens, or the tokens themselves, even before he had introduced his circus to America. Another possibility is that Ricketts commissioned the dies in England after he had experienced some success and then sent them to the U.S. Mint for striking. In this case, however, one still must ask why they ended up staying in the possession of the U.S. Mint.

Although a lavish spender, Ricketts was careful with every scrap of excess material. He sold wood remnants and nails from torn-down venues and employed a seamstress to repurpose every costume. One would think he would have requested the return of the dies, especially considering that he brought his circus to several other venues, including ones in Canada. Surely he would have wanted to keep the dies in his possession for future use, not least when he was virtually bankrupt and leaving the United States to start a new life and circus in the West Indies.

Additionally, had the dies been commissioned in England, it seems likely that they would have mirrored the Ricketts family coat of arms more precisely, given the better minting tools and technologies available in London and Birmingham at the time. It also seems likely that, if really manufactured in England, the token would have appeared somewhere in the English merchant, circus, or theater token literature. Finally, if made in England, one would have expected to see at least some trial remnants retained as collectables and a few tokens in English collections over the ages. To the author's knowledge, only one somewhat circulated piece has ever appeared outside the United States.¹⁸

First Token

Next, given the time when Ricketts first arrived in Philadelphia and the term that the circus ran in the United States and Canada, is it truly the first token made by the U.S. Mint? Leaving the die manufacture question aside, it is still difficult to determine with any certainty whether the token was the first struck by the U.S. Mint, especially given the scant early records. Nevertheless, considering that the circus first opened its doors to the public in 1793 and Ricketts left North America in 1801, and if one accepts that it was a U.S. Mint product or struck from a die available to the Mint, it is hard to imagine a date of manufacture much later than 1795 or 1796. Such a date leaves only the Major Henry Lee medal as a possible predecessor to the Ricketts's Circus token (Fig. 7).¹⁹

An further possibility is that the token was engraved and struck at the U.S. Mint in the early nineteenth century, before 1841. Mint technology did advance and the fine execution of the devices could have been accomplished more easily in the early nineteenth century. A silver and bronze initial striking during this period, however, makes little sense. While founding the first American circus was quite an achievement, it would not have been cause for some later posthumous commemoration. Likewise, if the tokens had been made in England during the nineteenth century, when there was a high demand for collectible tokens, we would expect some record of them and a greater abundance of surviving examples.

Admission Token

¹⁸ The extra fine Ford example (lot 22118) was attributed to a 1959 purchase from Fred Baldwin of London by Mr. Ford. However, one token that could have been kept over the years as a keepsake from an American circus visit or even purchased by a collector in Great Britain does not persuade the author that these tokens were made in any kind of volume in England.

¹⁹ Notwithstanding the exploits of Major Henry Lee and his cavalry throughout the Revolutionary War, his was not one of the *Comitia* medals struck in Paris, although he was voted a medal by the Continental

If one accepts that the silver and bronze Ricketts's Circus tokens were first struck in the late eighteenth century, it seems very probable that they served as admission tokens. At that time, it was common practice for theaters and circus companies in England to issue tokens for annual attendance and/or advertisement. In fact, there is an abundance of both Hughes and Astley circus tokens in the annals of English token literature. The tokens were a clever way to encourage circus-goers to keep coming back again and again for new performances, and we know that Ricketts relentlessly changed and refined his performances to bring back circus enthusiasts to see his latest spectacles. Finally, the fact that they were produced in both silver and copper seems to tie nicely together with the fact that Ricketts always had a two-tier pricing model of one dollar for box seats (presumably requiring a silver token) and a half-dollar for pit seats (presumably requiring a copper token). In fact, at the beginning of the 1796–1797 season, during which 32 distinct performances were conducted, the *Aurora and General Advertiser* of Philadelphia on October 13, 1796, announced that ticket prices would be the same as last season except new "SILVER TICKETS to admit for the Season [could] be had by applying to Mr. Ricketts at the Pantheon, or at Oellers Hotel."

The only real argument against the admission token theory is that only one silver and one of the bronze specimens still extant show significant evidence of wear or usage. But then again, given that Ricketts and his circus literally disappeared in 1803, there was little reason for them to remain in circulation other than as novelties or as curiosities to be forgotten in some desk drawer. As the tokens would have been most likely to circulate around Philadelphia, the home of Ricketts's Pantheon, the disappearance of many of them may be attributed to close proximity to the Mint, which regularly recycled all forms of copper coins and tokens.

Token Design

The obverse of the Ricketts's Circus token bears a central device that generally conforms to the Ricketts family coat of arms (Figs. 8–9, below). However, on the family coat of arms (which is known in several variations depending on time and place), the heraldic escutcheon (shield) is surmounted by a helm ornamented with a torse (wreath) and a crest composed of an arm wielding a sword. An elaborate leafy or feathery mantling extends from the helm on either side of the escutcheon. The device on the token completely lacks the helm and its mantling, but only features the crest.

The escutcheon on both the token and the family coat of arms is charged with three roses (two above and one below) divided by a chevron of two crossed swords. On the family coat of arms these charges appear on a field of ermine, but on the Ricketts's Circus token, the distinctive ermine spots are rendered as simple dots.

The escutcheon of the token is also distinct from that of the family coat of arms in that it is flanked by a palm branch on the left and an olive branch to the right. The branches essentially take the place of the leafy mantling of the helm on the family coat of arms.

In the eighteenth century, one's family coat of arms was taken quite seriously and most representations were made with great precision. The differences between the full Ricketts family arms and the coat of arms on the token may support the U.S. Mint product theory: it was all the

Congress in 1779. Lee later applied to Jefferson for the medal in 1790. Jefferson took steps to have the medal executed at the U.S. Mint by Joseph Wright, which were completed around 1792 or 1793, but nothing firmly indicates when the Medals were made other than a Congressional Report of February 9, 1795. See Robert W. Julian, *Medals of The United States Mint: The First Century* (Token and Medal Society).

Mint engraver could do to make a device as close to the family coat of arms as it did. The simplification of the coat of arms on the token would not have been necessary in England or France where the mints had access to more advanced technology. The engraving capabilities existing in America at the time were fairly limited and, as illustrated above, the letter-punches do bear some similarity to those used for other U.S. Mint issues of the time. While it might be intriguing to infer some meaning in the dissimilarities between the two coats of arms, perhaps the simple explanation is just that the token represented the state of the art of what was possible at the U.S. Mint in the late eighteenth century.

The silver token (Fig. 12, below) is 29 mm in diameter, bearing a reeded edge and weighing approximately 100 grains. The bronze reeded-edge token is also 29 mm in diameter and weighs approximately 84.25 grains. Finally, the bronze plain-edge token is also 29 mm in diameter, but at twice the thickness of a reeded edge-example, it weighs approximately 170 grains. The author has noted very little differentiation in diameter and weight from the examples he has studied, which may again suggest the involvement of the U.S. Mint.

The obverse and reverse of all varieties have bold denticulation. One dentil longer than the rest appears on the obverse just right and below the crossed branches at about 5:58. The reverse bears the legend RICKETTS'S CIRCUS. There is a bold center dot between RICKETTS'S and CIRCUS on all varieties. A festoon of roses appears above the two-line legend and a half wreath of oak branches below. Some commentators have suggested that "Ricketts's" is a misspelling and the legend was engraved in error. While it is true that the Ricketts name was ultimately derived from the French Huguenot name Richet and has had various spellings over time, most of the contemporary press spelled his name "Ricketts" as on the tokens. Given Ricketts' attention to detail and his flair for self-promotion it seems unlikely that he would have allowed misspellings to persist.



Figure 8. Ricketts family coat of arms.

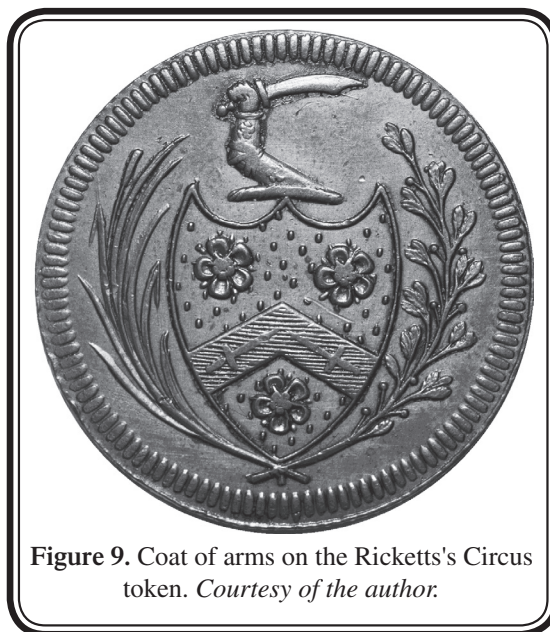


Figure 9. Coat of arms on the Ricketts's Circus token. *Courtesy of the author.*

Originals and Restrikes

It has been generally accepted in modern times that the reeded-edge examples of the token are original strikes of the Mint and the plain edge examples are mid- to late-nineteenth century restrikes. However, when the tokens appeared in the 1884 J. T. Levick Sale (see below) this distinction was not made and both edge varieties were viewed as rarities of roughly equal value.

John J. Ford was the first to propose the plain-edge restrike theory. Ford was a great enthusiast and student of the Ricketts's Circus token and tokens in general. Over his life, he owned at least four examples, three "originals" and one "restrike." Ford argued that since the dies were on hand at the mint in 1841, they were perfect candidates for restriking.

We know that during his term as Chief Coiner of the U.S. Mint from 1814 to 1839 (and even beyond his retirement), Adam Eckfeldt assembled the Mint Cabinet (which now ultimately forms the basis of the National Collection at the Smithsonian). It is also well known that Eckfeldt actively traded errors and patterns and even made restrikes and other oddities at the Mint to offer collectors in order to acquire the missing pieces for the Cabinet.²⁰ In light of this information, it is difficult to imagine a better prize for Eckfeldt to trade than a limited-run restrike of the first U.S. Mint token for Ricketts's Circus. Ford's restrike theory makes a great deal of sense and has lived on to attain the status of "fact" among many authors and cataloguers.

Perhaps the best countervailing argument to the restrike theory was postulated by Michael Hodder in his catalogue of the Schenkel Sale. There he observes that the weight, thickness, and even color of the plain-edge tokens mirror those of the large cents produced in 1795. This argument is interesting, but one must ask why both a reeded-edge variety and plain-edge variety would have been made contemporaneously and why Ricketts would have voluntarily used twice the copper to make the plain-edge piece. Again, while only a subjective observation, after hours of study, it does appear that the thicker plain-edge examples with sharply cornered rims look a little more professionally made (and presumably later) than the reeded-edge examples.

Ricketts's Circus Token Census

The first appearance of the Ricketts's Circus token in a numismatic at auction was in Elliot Woodward's Mickley Sale of October 28, 1867, wherein he listed a silver and "bronze" specimen as lots 2640 and 2641. We further learn from the 1878 *American Journal of Numismatics* (AJN) that "We are acquainted with four of these curious and interesting specimens." The AJN article indicates that Mr. J. T. Levick had purchased the two from the Mickley Sale²¹ and had one additional silver example. It goes on to explain that Mr. Bushnell, "in whose immense collection are generally found duplicates, triplicates, and quadruplicates of anything that is choice and difficult to obtain," also owned a bronze specimen. The token is illustrated by a woodcut and more light is shed on Mr. Ricketts and his circus. It is further reported that the image for the woodcut was obtained from the collection of Mr. Colburn²² and represents a token used for ticket admission. Since the article also discusses the tokens owned by Bushnell and Levick, it would seem that by 1878, the count was two in silver and three in bronze.

²⁰ See George D. Evans, *Illustrated History of the United States Mint* (Philadelphia, 1885). See also, Pete Smith, "Adam Eckfeldt struck the first US Coins," *The Numismatist* (January 1997): 63.

²¹ This is consistent with the annotated copy of the Mickley Sale in the author's possession.

²² The article does not mention whether the Colburn piece was silver or bronze, or whether it had a reeded edge or not. It is assumed here that the Colburn token was a reeded-edge bronze piece, but, as discussed below, this could very well be the piece Levick traded his second silver specimen for to get a plain-edge thick-planchet example.

3.50	227	Rahming, Edwin * R LONG ISLAND About unc. B. Very rare. 15. Plate.	I
20.00	228	RICKETTS'S CIRCUS Oak branches crossed below. R Arms in crested shield within palm and olive branches crossed. Very fine, extremely rare. Silver, milled edge. 28½.	I
14.00	229	— Another, precisely as last, in copper. V. fine, olive shade. Plate.	I
9.25	230	— Another, like the preceding, with edge plain struck on a much thicker planchet; barely evidence of even handling; a medium brown. 28.	I

Ricketts's Circus has generally been catalogued as a Philadelphia Token, although New York and also Boston claim its paternity. Washington was one of its patrons in Philadelphia. It was located at 12th and Market Sts. from October, 1792 until the spring of 1795, when it went to Boston. It is recorded that "Rickett's Amphitheatre offered to exhibit one evening for the benefit of the poor (of New York city) to purchase firewood, which was accepted by the corporation, and the sum of \$340 was collected on the occasion." It was destroyed by fire in Philadelphia in December, 1799.

Figure 10. Ricketts's Circus tokens in Lyman Low's January 11–12, 1898, sale of the Betts collection annotated with prices realized. *Courtesy of the author.*

The tokens next appear in Woodward's sale of the J. T. Levick Collection, which occurred over the course of May 26 to 29, 1884. In this sale, three Ricketts's Circus tokens were offered for sale as lots 1164, 1165, and 1166. The silver example in very fine condition brought \$7.50, a bronze specimen in nearly proof condition brought \$12.25, and a second bronze piece "on a plain edge planchet of nearly double thickness" again in nearly proof condition also brought \$12.25. The Levick Sale is obviously interesting as one wonders if the *AJN* articles mistook one of Levick's silver pieces for a thick plain-edge bronze piece. However, since Levick was one of the Editors of the *AJN*, he more likely traded his second silver example for a plain edge bronze piece giving him a complete set. Also, by specifying that the last lot had a plain edge, the clear implication was that the first two were reeded edge. It is also notable that Woodward and Levick, both specialists in tokens to some degree, did not specifically call out the last token as a restrike, or mention the mode of acquisition.

In Lyman Low's sale of Benjamin Betts's collection on January 11 and 12, 1898, a very fine silver token (lot 228) brought \$20.00, a very fine (presumably reeded-edge) "copper" example (lot 229) brought \$14.00, and finally, a barely handled "much thicker" plain-edge example (lot 230) brought \$9.25 (Fig. 10).²³ While the author has not been able to locate an annotated copy of Woodward's 1884 Levick Sale catalogue, it seems probable that Betts acquired all his Ricketts's Circus tokens in that sale. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the disparity in grade of the copper/bronze reeded edge piece described by Woodward as nearly proof and Levick's description as very fine. So, in about 1900, there seem to have been two extant silver specimens, assuming Levick originally had two but traded one for a proof-like "restrike," and four bronze originals including the Mickley/Levick, Bushnell, Colburn, and potentially the new "very fine" piece in Betts. Finally, the one "restrike" variety was known in the Levick/Betts piece.²⁴

²³ It is interesting that in the Levick sale, the near proof reeded-edge example brought the same price as the near proof plain edge example, yet four years later, a very fine reeded-edge piece brought \$14.00 while the "barely handled" plain-edge piece brought just \$9.25. Is it possible that collectors were distinguishing between "original" and "restruck" tokens already in 1898 and indicating their preference for "originals"?

²⁴ It is interesting to note that neither the Colburn nor the Bushnell Sales included a Ricketts's Circus token included in their collections. It is possible that Betts acquired his reeded-edge piece from one of them, but in the interest of being as expansive as possible, the author has opted for the larger count.

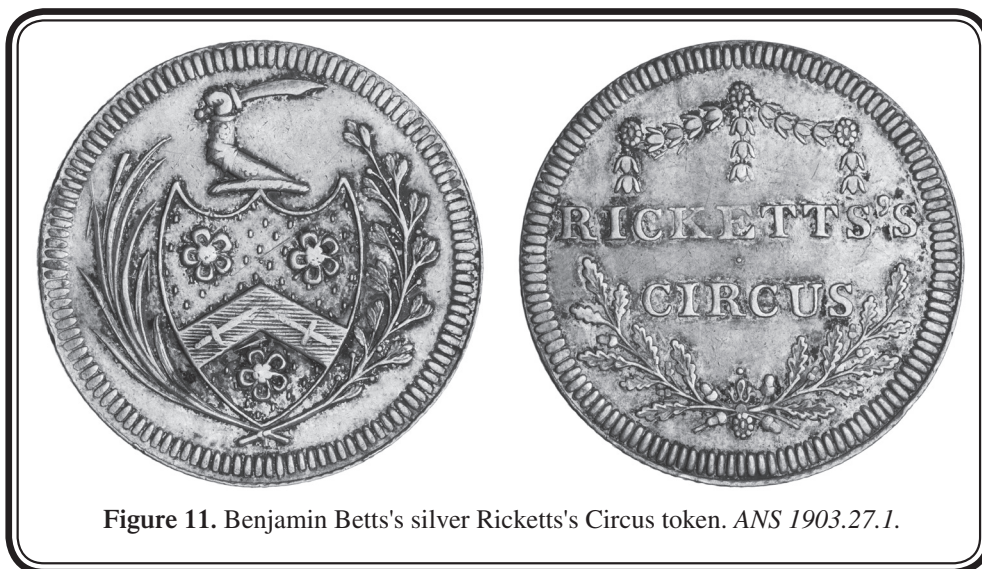


Figure 11. Benjamin Betts's silver Ricketts's Circus token. ANS 1903.27.1.

The token was next sighted in 1903, when Daniel Parish donated a silver example to the ANS (Fig. 11). He acquired this coin from the Benjamin Betts Sale, leaving the known silver population unchanged. Shortly following this donation, Thomas L. Elder's May 18, 1917, sale of the collection of Dr. B. P. Wright included another undescribed token (lot 409). Elder indicates that Dr. Wright purchased the token in the Betts Sale and by lot number we can conclude it was the very fine reeded-edge example, which Elder grades as extremely fine. This token was, in turn purchased in the Wright Sale by Hillyer Ryder. It passed through his estate (and presumably the hands of John J. Ford) and was ultimately sold privately to Michael B. Zeddies. The Zeddies token was once again sold by Bowers and Merena in the Chris Schenkel Collection sale of November 1990. As lot 4199 it brought \$3,520.²⁵

Stack's November 12, 1974, Groves Sale brought the next example onto the scene as lot 349. This lot was a silver, reeded-edge example. While not provenanced as such, it seems highly likely that this extra fine specimen was the second Levick piece, possibly traded away for the proof plain-edge example that appeared in his sale. Very interestingly, the Stack's cataloguer noted that the token was "expertly plugged." Since the brief 1848 *AJN* mention of Levick's two examples did not comment on whether either of them were holed or plugged, one could argue that the Groves piece is a third silver example. However, the author feels that the plugged hole may have been the reason why Levick seems to have traded it away for a proof "restrike." If this view is correct, the number of specimens in 1974 remained the same as it was in 1917.

The next example we see is in the Bowers and Merena sale of September 9–11, 1985. Here a bronze specimen owned by Roy Van Ormer was auctioned as lot 2987.²⁶ This uncirculated plain-edge example with no provenance brought \$3,300. The same token reappeared in Joseph Levine's Presidential Coin and Antique Company's July 2, 1994, sale as lot 057. It is possible that this is the Levick/Betts "restrike" plain edge coin, but even after careful examination of the images, there can be no certainty due the poor quality of the Levick photographs. Taking an expansive view, this would add one to the plain-edge count.

²⁵ Many of the coins in the Schenkel Sale were Ford duplicates. It is ironic that the Zeddies token appeared in that sale since, according to the lot description, Ford no doubt sold it to Zeddies previously.

²⁶ This token was included in the Henry Spangenberg Collection of circus, museum, soda, and related tokens though technically not part of that collection. That is why some enthusiasts refer to it as the Sangenberg token.

Another uncirculated and unprovenanced plain-edge example appeared in Stack's January 1999 *Americana Sale* as lot 123. It would be easy to say that this piece is just another recycling of the Levick/Betts and/or Presidential piece, but again there can be no certainty. The author once owned this example, but after careful comparison with the available images from each of the preceding sales, the only conclusion that could be reached was that it is not the Van Ormer/Presidential example. The author feels that it is probably not the Levick/Betts coin, thus leaving us with certainly two and possibly three plain-edge pieces.

In the June 23, 2004, Stack's/American Numismatic Rarities sale of the Medio/Da Costa Gomez Collection we find one more "choice uncirculated" plain-edge example listed as lot 2805. While this token is potentially one of the earlier plain edge-examples, this piece was accompanied by an "ancient collector's ticket (reading in fine script) Philadelphia/Ricket's (sic)/Circus (which Washington/ attended)/ Bronze proof/ex. rare 7.50." However, since the Levick token sold for \$14.25 and the Betts token sold for \$9.25 it seems unlikely that the Medio token could be either of these examples. Since neither the Van Ormer nor the Americana token came with any such lot ticket, it seems fairly clear that it is not one of those pieces either. Thus, the plain-edge count stands at a possible three to four examples. The Medio piece was purchased by a well-known token dealer and subsequently sold to a Midwest Colonial coin collector during the 2004 C-4 convention.

Our tracing of the elusive Ricketts's Circus tokens comes to end during 2013 when Stack's brought to auction the penultimate sale of the Ford Collection. In August of 2013, the twenty-third Ford Sale included three examples of the bronze token: one uncirculated reeded-edge example, one extremely fine reeded-edge example, and one gem uncirculated plain-edge "restrike" example. The extremely fine reeded-edge example was described in the catalog as having been purchased from Baldwin's in England. The other two were described as having provenance information in their accompanying envelopes. Unfortunately, little useful information was contained in those envelopes.

While the "Baldwin's purchase" attribution does not necessarily preclude the Ford extremely fine reeded-edge example from being from one of the ungraded and unplated Bushnell or Colburn pieces, it does seem somewhat unlikely. However, the original uncirculated Ford reeded-edge and plain-edge examples, upon examination, could very well trace their histories back to the Levick tokens. While these two Ford examples fit nicely with the Levick sale, the absolute answers to these questions are probably lost to time. Thus we are left with a reasonable minimum and maximum band of possible extant examples of the token: two reeded-edge examples in silver; five to six reeded edge examples in bronze; and four to five plain-edge "restrike" examples in bronze. The total potential population then lies between eleven and thirteen examples.

NEW YORK PATTERNS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate I (EXCELSIOR and NOVA EBORAC Coppers)

by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario

Introduction

Beginning in February 1787, Ephraim Brasher and John Bailey began to petition (together or separately remains an open question) the state of New York for the right to produce a copper coinage for the state. Although both men were highly qualified for the enterprise—Brasher was a noted goldsmith and assayer while Bailey was a skilled silversmith and swordmaker—the state decided not to pursue a New York copper coinage in March 1787, and their request was denied.

Several copper patterns survive from this failed venture. The obverse of these coins, known as EXCELSIOR coppers, copies the Great Seal of New York, created on April 15, 1777, in its depiction of Liberty and Justice supporting a shield emblazoned with the sun rising over a mountain and the Hudson River. The state motto, EXCELSIOR ("Ever Upward") appears below. The reverse carries the displayed eagle and shield device taken from the Great Seal of the United States, along with the motto, E PLURIBUS UNUM ("Out of Many, One").

Although they had been denied by the state, Brasher and Bailey unofficially struck their own copper coinage with types imitating regal and imitation halfpence of George III. In this way, the two men were following the pattern of state coinage development in Connecticut and Vermont. The obverse of these so-called NOVA EBORAC coppers features a laureate and mailed bust facing right while the reverse depicts a seated personification who might be interpreted variously as Liberty, Columbia, or New York. The obverse legend names the state in Latin (NOVA EBORAC for *Nova Eboraca*, "New York") while the reverse proclaims VIRT ET LIB ("Virtue and Liberty").

Of the two authentic EXCELSIOR coppers in the ANS collection, one (No. 2) was purchased in 1899 from an unknown source for the grand sum of \$28.30. Included in that price were also a 1747 copper plate money *daler* of Frederick I and three Roman *denarii*. The other (No. 1) was purchased from Henry Grünthal in 1956. Grünthal was Assistant to the Chief Curator and Curator of European and Modern Coins at the ANS from 1953 to 1973 and is probably best known to the Colonial numismatic community for his role in selling the Beach collection of New Jersey coppers to the Society.

The ANS cabinet includes six authentic NOVA EBORAC coppers, covering three of the four varieties listed by Breen. The "large head" variety is represented by coin no. 3, which was purchased from W. W. Dalley for \$12 in 1949. Coin nos. 4–5 are "medium head" varieties with the reverse figure facing left. No. 4 was placed on perpetual deposit at the ANS by the New York Historical Society in 1922 and no provenance information is available for no. 5. Coin no. 6 is a "medium head" variety with the reverse figure facing right. It was bequeathed to the ANS along with 11 other Colonial coins by R. D. Allen in 1954. We can only assume from its right-facing figure on the reverse that coin no. 7 originally had a "medium head" because its obverse

has been smoothed flat and re-engraved as a love token. A large H in a vibrant vegetal style appears where the head should be and a hole has been pierced for suspension from a chain. This modified coin was donated by Jay Donald Rogasner in 1971. Rogasner is perhaps best known for a number of outstanding European rarities that have entered the Society's cabinet from his collection. The final coin in the plate (No. 8) is a "medium head" flip-over doublestrike depicting only the head on each side of the coin. This interesting error piece was purchased as part of a large group from Harvard University's Fogg Art Museum in 1977.

Catalog

EXCELSIOR Coppers

Obv. EXCELSIOR. Shield emblazoned with scene of sun rising above mountain and Hudson River, topped by displayed eagle standing left or right on globe (as indicated); all supported by Liberty standing to l., holding pole topped by liberty cap, and Justice standing to r., holding scales.

Rev. E PLURIBUS. UNUM. Eagle displayed, on breast, American shield emblazoned with a field of argent, six pales gules, and a chief azure; olive branch in right talon and bundle of arrows in left. In exergue, 1787.

1. 28mm, 141 grains. Breen 979. ANS 1956.101.1.
2. 28mm, 134.7 grains. Breen 980. ANS 1899.25.1.

NOVA EBORAC Coppers

Obv. Legend as indicated. Laureate and cuirassed bust right imitating regal halfpence of George III.

Rev. Legend as indicated. Liberty/Columbia/New York seated left or right on globe (as indicated), holding olive branch and pole topped by liberty cap; grounded shield beside. In exergue, 1787.

3. 28mm, 134.8 grains. * * NOVA EBORAC */* VIRT . ET LIB. *. Figure left. Breen 985. ANS 1949.13.1.
4. 28mm, 122.6 grains. * NOVA * EBORAC */* VIRT . ET LIB *. Figure left. Breen 986. ANS 1922.38.162.
5. 28mm, 137.5 grains. * NOVA * EBORAC */* VIRT . ET LIB *. Figure left. Breen 986. ANS 0000.999.28466.
6. 28mm, 110.6 grains. * NOVA * EBORAC */* VIRT ET . LIB *. Figure right. Breen 987. ANS 1954.95.5.
7. 27mm. 78.7 grains. * VIRT ET . LIB *. Figure right. Obverse re-engraved as a love token with a large H design. Breen 987. ANS 1971.42.62.
8. 28mm. 83.7 grains. * NOVA * EBORAC */* NOVA * EBORAC *. Obverse flip-over doublestrike. Breen 986–987. ANS 1977.135.225.

NEW YORK PATTERNS IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate I
(EXCELSIOR and NOVA EBORAC Coppers)



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



CONNECTICUT COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

**Plate XIV: 1786
(Miller 5.1-H.1 to 5.2-I)**

**by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹**

Introduction

The Confederation period copper coinage of the state of Connecticut was legally struck in New Haven by the Company for Coining Coppers from November 12, 1785, to June 1, 1787. From June 1, 1787, to the Fall of 1788, Connecticut coppers continued to be struck by James Jarvis and Company. The types essentially consisted of modified versions of the royal bust obverse and Britannia reverse familiar from contemporary English halfpence. The Latin regal legends were replaced by new ones that identified the coppers as being issued by the authority of Connecticut (AUCTORI CONNEC) and advertised American independence and liberty (INDE ET LIB). This coinage was popular, spawning imitative issues struck for Vermont and numerous illegal counterfeits. The problem of counterfeiting combined with apparent mint irregularities led to a state inquest in January of 1789. On June 20, 1789, the right to produce state coppers for Connecticut was officially terminated by the federal government.

The collection of Connecticut coppers maintained by the American Numismatic Society may be one of the most complete in existence and contains the vast majority of the die varieties recorded in Henry C. Miller's *The State Coinage of Connecticut* (New York, 1920). The Society's Connecticut holdings are so extensive due to two major gifts in the early twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In 1931, the Frederick Canfield collection of Connecticut coppers (285 pieces) was loaned and subsequently donated to the ANS by the New Jersey Historical Society. In 2005, the American Numismatic Society acquired the Connecticut collection of Edward R. Barnsley (1131 pieces) thanks to the generosity of James C. Spilman and the Colonial Newsletter Foundation.

This fourteenth plate in a series to fully publish the Connecticut coppers in the ANS cabinet features one piece from the Canfield collection (No. 133) and seven from the Barnsley/CNLF gift (Nos. 131 and 135–140). One coin (No. 134) was donated by Edward T. Newell in 1939. Newell was a dynamic collector and brilliant numismatist who served as President of the American Numismatic Society between 1916 and his death in 1941. The remaining coin in the plate (No. 132) lacks all provenance information.

The Canfield coin has a white painted die variety (PDV) on the obverse giving the Miller number. Coin no. 132 has a very similar PDV, perhaps suggesting that it is a Canfield piece that has lost its provenance information.

¹ The commentary has benefited from discussion with Randy Clark, Louis Jordan, and Philip Mossman.

Catalog

Obv. Legend as indicated. Laureate and cuirassed bust left, imitating regal halfpence of George II.

Rev. Legend as indicated. Liberty/Columbia/Connecticut seated left on globe, holding olive branch and pole topped by liberty cap; grounded shield beside. In exergue, 1786.

Miller 5.1-H.1

131. 28mm, 141.8 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.432.
132. 28mm, 129.3 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: ET·LIB:..Painted Miller die variety on obverse (5 H¹ in left field and M on right). ANS 0000.999.19831.

Miller 5.2-I

133. 29mm, 125.4 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. Painted Miller die variety on obverse (5² I in left field and M on right). ANS 1931.58.444.
134. 28mm, 153.2 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 1939.86.3.
135. 28mm, 150.7 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.154.
136. 28mm, 123.7 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.434.
137. 28mm, 133.6 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.435.
138. 28mm, 135.0 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.436.
139. 28mm, 117.5 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.437.
140. 28mm, 146.9 grains. AUCTORI: CONNEC: / INDE: -:- ET·LIB:.. ANS 2005.37.438.

CONNECTICUT COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate XIV: 1786
(Miller 5.1-H.1 to 5.2-I)



131



132



133



134



135



136



137



138



139



140

NEW JERSEY COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate XIV: 1787 (Maris 54-k to 56-n)

by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹

Introduction

The partnership of Walter Mould, Thomas Goadsby, and Albion Cox received a two-year contract to produce three million copper coins for the state of New Jersey on June 1, 1786. Their coins carried the obverse type of a horse head and plow derived from the state seal and an American shield on the reverse. The legends give the Latin name of the state (NOVA CAESAREA) and present the national motto of the United States (E PLURIBUS UNUM) for the first time on any coin. By the Fall of 1786 the partners had fallen into disagreement and divided the coinage quota between a mint operated by Goadsby and Cox at Rahway, near Elizabethtown (now Elizabeth), NJ, and another operated by Mould near Morristown, NJ. Further problems developed in 1788. Mould ceased his involvement with the coinage at this time and Cox faced litigation by his creditors and by Goadsby, which resulted in the seizure of the mint equipment. By the middle of the year, the remainder of the coining contract and the Rahway mint equipment had been obtained by Matthias Ogden, the primary mover behind the New Jersey coinage legislation. Despite having access only to dies dated 1786 and 1787, Ogden continued to strike New Jersey coppers at his barn in Elizabethtown until as late as 1790.

The American Numismatic Society's holdings of New Jersey coppers are extensive, thanks to the New Jersey Historical Society's donation of duplicates from the Frederick Canfield collection (24 pieces) in 1931 and the purchase of a large part of the Harry Prescott Clark Beach collection (829 pieces) from Henry Grünthal in 1945. Grünthal, who had studied numismatics in Germany, later went on to become Assistant to the Chief Curator and Curator of European and Modern Coins at the ANS from 1953 to 1973. Most of the die varieties identified by Edward Maris in *A Historic Sketch of the Coins of New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1881) may be found in the ANS collection. For a complete listing of varieties discovered since 1881, see now, Roger Siboni, John Howes, and Buell Ish, *New Jersey State Coppers* (New York, 2013).

On this fourteenth plate in a series to fully publish the New Jersey coppers belonging to the American Numismatic Society, three are Canfield duplicates from the New Jersey Historical Society (Nos. 134 and 137–138) and four (Nos. 133, 135, and 139–140) are Beach coins purchased from Grünthal in 1945. Coin no. 131 is an additional piece that Henry Grünthal sold to the Society in 1974. No provenance information is known for coin no. 132.

Three examples of Maris 56-n (Nos. 137–139) are especially notable as they are overstruck on contemporary Connecticut and Vermont copper hosts.

¹ The commentary has benefited from discussion with Louis Jordan, Philip Mossman, and Ray Williams.

Catalog

Obv. NOVA CÆSAREA, around. Head of horse right, above plow right (Nos. 121 and 127–130) or left (Nos. 122–126); in exergue, 1787.

Rev. *E*PLURIBUS*UNUM*, around. American shield emblazoned with a field of argent, six pales gules, and a chief azure.

Maris 54-k

- 131. 28mm, 124.8 grains. ANS 1974.177.15.
- 132. 28mm, 139.8 grains. ANS 0000.999.28489.

Maris 55-l

- 133. 28mm, 141.6 grains. ANS 1945.42.724.

Maris 55-m

- 134. 28mm, 144.2 grains. ANS 1931.58.522.
- 135. 28mm, 147.6 grains. ANS 1945.42.725.

Maris 56-n

- 136. 28mm, 139.0 grains. ANS 1931.58.523.
- 137. 28mm, 110.8 grains. Overstruck on a Vermont copper. ANS 1931.58.524.
- 138. 28mm, 119.6 grains. Overstruck on a Connecticut copper. ANS 1931.58.525.
- 139. 28mm, 118.2 grains. Overstruck on a Vermont copper. ANS 1945.42.726.
- 140. 28mm, 145.5 grains. ANS 1945.42.727.

**NEW JERSEY COPPERS IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY**

**Plate XIV: 1787
(Maris 54-k to 56-n)**



131



132



133



134



135



136



137



138



139



140

MASSACHUSETTS BAY SILVER IN THE COLLECTION OF THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

Plate VII: Oak Tree Sixpence and Threepences (Noe 22 to 28 / Salmon 2b-B to 6-B)

by
Oliver D. Hoover; Burlington, Ontario¹

Introduction

On May 26–27, 1652, the Massachusetts General Court issued Acts for the establishment of a silver mint in Boston as a measure of protection against the increasing problem of light weight Spanish-American cobs circulating in Massachusetts Bay. The Boston silversmiths, John Hull and Robert Sanderson were appointed to operate the mint. They were required to produce coins of sterling (.925) fineness in English denominations, but at a reduced weight standard of 72 grains to the shilling. The official weight of the contemporary English shilling was 92.9 grains.

Between 1652 and 1682, Hull and Sanderson struck four series of silver coins for Massachusetts Bay. The earliest of these, produced in June–October 1652, consisted of crude, blank planchets marked with two stamps: NE for New England on the obverse and a value mark in Roman numerals on the reverse. Legislation was passed, on October 19, 1652, to abandon this simple design in favor of a more coin-like design produced by full-size dies. The obverse of the new coinage featured a willow tree, while the English legend, MASATHVSETS IN / NEW ENGLAND AN DOM was placed in the border, broken between the obverse and reverse. The 1652 date of the original mint legislation and the value indicator also appeared in the center of the reverse. The willow tree coinage continued in production until c. 1660 or 1662, when the willow on the obverse was replaced by an oak tree. The change in tree was also accompanied by a change in production technology. While the willow tree coinage had been struck by hand, the new oak tree series was struck in a rocker arm press. In c. 1667, the tree was again changed, this time from an oak to a pine. The pine tree coinage—the most enduring of the Massachusetts silver series—was struck until 1682, when the mint contract expired. Hull died the following year. Although sporadic attempts were made to revive the mint until 1690, these were quashed by the restored Stuart kings, Charles II (1659–1685) and James II (1685–1688), and finally put to rest by the increased value of silver and restored confidence in Spanish-American coins at the end of the 1680s.

The cabinet of the American Numismatic Society is home to some 151 authentic pieces of Massachusetts Bay silver of all four series, as well as a large selection (70 pieces) of electrotypes and fakes. The core of the collection is almost certainly the 51 pieces donated by the prominent New York collector, William B. Osgood Field, in 1946. The ANS collection includes most of the varieties identified by Sydney P. Noe in his three major studies: *The New England and Willow Tree Coinage* (1943), *The Oak Tree Coinage of Massachusetts* (1947), and *The Pine Tree Coinage of Massachusetts* (1952), as well as in Christopher Salmon's *The Silver Coins of Massachusetts* (2011).

This seventh plate in a series to fully publish the Massachusetts Bay silver coins belonging to

¹ The commentary has benefited from discussion with Louis Jordan, Philip Mossman, and Christopher Salmon.

the American Numismatic Society features the last Oak Tree sixpence and five threepences. Of these, only the sixpence (No. 54) comes from the Osgood Field gift. All the others were purchased in the 1940s and 1960s. In 1943, the ANS bought coin no. 54 along with other Oak Tree and Pine Tree silver from C. P. Knoth and no. 59 from Charles Würtzbach. Coin no. 55 was purchased from Henry Grünthal for \$30 in 1945. The Society bought coin no. 56 from L. Merkin in 1969 and no. 58 from Sotheby Parke Bernet in the year before.

Catalog

Sixpences

Obv. Oak tree. MASATHVSETS* around.

Rev. 1652 VI in center. IN NEWENGLAND·ANO* around.

Noe 22/Salmon 2b-B

54. 28mm, 32.0 grains. ANS 1946.89.77.

Threepences

Obv. Oak tree. MASATHVSETS* around.

Rev. 1652 III in center. NEWENGLAND* around.

Noe 23/Salmon 1-A

55. 18mm, 18.3 grains. ANS 1943.111.2.

Noe 23/Salmon 2-A

56. 18mm, 16.4 grains. ANS 1969.31.1

Noe 25/Salmon 3-Ai

57. 18mm, 18.4 grains. ANS 1945.45.1.

58. 18mm, 14.5 grains. ANS 1968.174.2.

Noe 27/Salmon 5-Aii

59. 18mm, 17.3 grains. ANS 1945.53.3.

Noe 28/Salmon 6-B

59. 18mm, 15.8 grains. ANS 1943.133.6.

**MASSACHUSETTS BAY SILVER IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE AMERICAN NUMISMATIC SOCIETY**

**Plate VII: Oak Tree Sixpence and Threepences
(Noe 22 to 28 / Salmon 2b-B to 6-B)**



54



55



56



57



58



59